

## NEWS RELEASE

### **6,000 to tackle Seattle's Columbia Center at Big Climb, Sunday, March 20**

*Big Climb is the second of two stair climbs in March benefitting The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*

SEATTLE – Over 6,000 climbers from 23 states and communities throughout Washington state will trade-in their stair steppers for a day on the steps of Seattle's Columbia Center, Sunday, March 20 at the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Big Climb benefitting The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

On Sunday, climbers ages 5 – 86, climbing in both “competitive” and “fun” categories, will sprint climb 788 feet in vertical elevation (1,311 stairs / 69 stories) from the Fifth Avenue lobby to the 73rd floor observation deck of the 76-story Columbia Center. Climbing gets underway at 8:30 a.m. and continues through 4 p.m.

At 943 feet, about one-and-a-half times the height of Seattle's Space Needle, the Columbia Center is the tallest building (by stories) on the West Coast and the 57<sup>th</sup> tallest building in the world. In 2010, the Big Climb raised a record \$1.5 million for the LLS.

The 2011 Big Climb's sold-out field includes the 2010 overall winner Canadian Shaun Stephens-Whale and Seattle's Kourtney Dexter, the 2010 women's champion. Last year, Stephens-Whale, a 21-year-old from Roberts Creek, British Columbia, climbed the 69 flights of stairs in 7-minute, 17-seconds for his second consecutive title. His time was just over 3 seconds off of his record time the previous year. Dexter, 30, made her second consecutive winning ascent in 9-minutes, 19-seconds to finish 25<sup>th</sup> overall.

Over 600 teams of climbers supporting friends and family battling blood cancer will participate in Sunday's Big Climb. Notable climbers include 5 over the age of 80, a group of 252 students and teachers from Illahee Middle School in Federal Way who prepare for the climb as a part of the school's PE curriculum, “Bring it On”, a team that includes 12 hearing and sight impaired climbers, and all 41 members of the University of Washington men's rowing team. The UW crew is climbing in support of a 1974 Husky oarsman who is currently undergoing treatment for chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

The 2011 climb honors 9-year-old Lydia Anderson of Lake Stevens, Wash. Lydia was first diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common form of blood cancer in adolescents, at just 4-years-old. After successfully completing an initial two years of treatment, Lydia again began experiencing back pain and other symptoms similar to what led to her first diagnosis. Lydia is just finishing her second round of treatment. To learn more about Lydia please visit <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/lydiaanderson>

An estimated 912,938 Americans are living with leukemia, Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, myeloma and myelodysplastic syndromes. According to the National Cancer Institute, an estimated combined total of 137,260 people in the United States will be diagnosed with leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma in 2011 with one person in the US being diagnosed with a blood cancer approximately every four minutes. New cases of leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma will account for 9 percent of the 1,529,560 new cancer cases diagnosed in the US this year alone.

**How to Help:** Although the Big Climb is sold out, the public can contribute to a local climber or team. To contribute, please visit [www.BigClimb.org](http://www.BigClimb.org).

The Big Climb is sponsored by CAC Real Estate Management, Pyramid Brewing, McCormick's, Genentech, Biogen Idec, Talking Rain, KJR 95.7 FM, Titan, Alaska Airlines, Blue Nile, Columbia Tower Club, Lake Union Wellness, Road Runner

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Our mission: *cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma and improve the quality of life of patients and their families*

Sports, Lake Quinault Lodge, Kalaloch Lodge, Brooks, Outdoors NW, Service Master Clean, Jamba Juice, Qdoba, Rite Aid Foundation, Pop Chips and Yami Yogurt.

### **About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society**

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services.

### **About the Washington/Alaska Chapter**

The Washington/Alaska Chapter ([www.lls.org/wa](http://www.lls.org/wa)) is one of 60 local chapters across the U.S., with an additional 11 chapters in Canada. Located in Seattle since 1984, the Washington/Alaska Chapter is close to the treatment facilities where patients and families come for lifesaving therapies. Major annual fundraising campaigns include Team In Training<sup>®</sup>, Light The Night<sup>®</sup> Walk, School & Youth Programs<sup>SM</sup>, the Scott Firefighter Stairclimb, Big Climb, Winter Pineapple Classic and The Leukemia Cup Regatta.

**[www.BigClimb.org](http://www.BigClimb.org)**

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